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TWO STUDIES IN SUGGESTION.

THE BOXERS.

ALL the world knows how the North of China was convulsed in the year 1900 by a wave of patriotic feeling stimulated by certain enthusiasts named by foreigners "Boxers." It is not quite so well known that this enthusiasm was propagated by recognized methods of psychical excitement.

This society, known as the *I ho ch'üan* or "Public Harmony Fists," arose in Shantung province, and, by the connivance of certain local officials whose national feelings outran their prudence, expanded and spread throughout that province and into the adjoining one of Chih-Li. In the course of the summer of 1900 all the provinces north of the Yellow River were permeated, the matter coming to a climax in the famous siege of the Peking legations.

All narrators agree that certain rites were performed by the propagators of the movement, which came to receive the vague title of "Boxer drill."

The following quotations will indicate the general nature of this process:

A. "They were not successful in getting the people to take it up at first, so they began with boys ten to twelve years of age. . . . After a few days it grew very rapidly. The drill, if it may be called so, consists in the boy repeating four short lines of some mystic words, and bowing to the south and falling backwards, when he goes into a trance,

remaining lying on his back for an indefinite time, when he rises and is endowed with wonderful strength, boys of twelve being as strong as men. They brandish swords and spears, not seeming to try to be skilful in handling them, but merely to show strength and place themselves under the protection of their symbols. They claim to be invulnerable."—Rev. C. W. Price of Fen-Chou-Fu, Shansi, in *With Fire and Sword in Shan-si* (Diary, June 1, 1900).

B. "Drill consisted in incense before a tablet. . . . and then working themselves by gymnastics, etc., into a state when they were no longer masters of themselves, but became unconscious. After remaining in this state for some time they would rise, declaring themselves possessed by the spirit of one of the heroes of antiquity. In this state they could perform great feats, but the chief mark was that they were invulnerable. Swords did not hurt, and they knocked their heads till great bumps appeared, but never felt it."—Slightly abridged from Mrs. A. H. Mateer, *Siege Days*, New York, Redell.

According to the Rev. G. T. Candlin (author of *Chinese Fiction*, Chicago, Open Court Pub. Co.) who was in Tung Shan during the outbreak, the "four mystic lines" were as follows, and were accompanied by certain postures (bowing in the Chinese ceremonial style of prostrating and beating the head on the ground):

T'ien ta, T'ien chiu k'ai
Ti ta, Ti chiu k'ai
Yao hsüeh I ho ch'üan
Huan tê Shih Fu lai.

"Beat the heaven, the heaven will open;
 Beat earth, and earth will open;
 Desire to learn the public-harmony-force¹
 Also get the masters to come."

He has also expressed an opinion that Buddhist and Taoist priests were connected in some way with the move-

¹ *Ch'üan* is "fist" but has in this case the sense of the power of the fist.

ment and employed hypnotic methods. In this connection it is interesting to note that Putnam Weale in his famous book *Indiscreet Letters from Peking* speaks of a temple which had been specially frequented by Boxers, and that native Christians had been murdered there, presumably in some sense as sacrifices. He also mentions the large part played by boys in the movement.

If we survey the whole of the information available (of which the above is but a representative selection) it is evident that

1. Ceremonial rites including prostrations and chants formed the initial feature of the process and were prolonged until the cerebral consciousness became dormant;
2. A period of trance supervened;
3. The trance was followed by a period of great excitement in which excessive muscular energy and anesthesia were shown;
4. Boys were more subject to the influence than men, but once started it was very contagious;
5. The dominant idea was to expel the foreigner, and this was readily acceptable to the people at the time on account of public events. This was shown in the motto

Pao ch'ing, mieh yang,

"Guard the Ch'ing Dynasty, destroy the foreigner."

The Chinese are peculiarly subject to the suggestive value of epigrammatic sentences like this, and in this case we have not far to look for the master-thought.

The belief in possession by spirits is of course not peculiar to them, but an example of it in China is given in the Rev. MacGowan's book on *Side Lights on Chinese Life*, quoted in my article on "Chinese Philosophy and Magic" in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, April 21, 1911. The Confucian philosophy as expounded by Chu Hsi implies that the vital spirit in men is one and

the same with that of their ancestors, so that it is not difficult for them to conceive that the peculiar individuality of an heroic ancestor may well up in the soul of his descendant. Such an idea forms a simple (and to them, rational) explanation of the enthusiasm and modification of personality which immediately succeeded the trance.

The words *Shih-Fu*, "master," may be taken as singular, plural or general, just as one thinks fit. Probably the intellects of the I Ho Ch'üan would instruct their followers specially as to the particular incarnation with which they happened to be favored.

The word *ta*, "to beat," is of very great idiomatic power in Mandarin speech, and must not necessarily be taken in its literal sense. It can mean "to appeal to," or "to serve," and undoubtedly is to be so taken.

Heaven and earth are of course the great Chinese polarities, the reservoirs of positive and negative energy.

The general sense of the chants is then that heavenly and earthly powers will respond if called upon, so that one should desire the patriotic vigor and call upon the dead to enthuse one.

The phenomenon of anesthesia (incorrectly regarded as invulnerability) is of course a usual concomitant of hysteropilepsy. The dauntless frenzy of the Mahdi's followers undoubtedly sprang from the same conviction of personal safety, their master having assured them that neither sword nor bullet could harm them.

The success of the influence with boys indicates the hindrances which the auto-suggestions of reason placed in the way of the submission of adults. Boys have universally been employed as "mediums" in the East.²

An interesting point in the whole question is whether it was incepted by intellects who understand more or less well the laws of psychology, or merely arose from the nat-

² See Lane's *Modern Egyptians*.

ural aggregation of anti-foreign influences. It will perhaps be useful to consider what are the Chinese notions as to psychology.

Primitive Psychology in China.

The only character in the ancient Chinese hieroglyphics which takes a permanent place in psychological ideas is *hsin*, "the heart." Egyptian and Semitic literature show the same feature. In all three languages other symbols are used for external quasi-psychical phenomena, but the individual's own feelings and thoughts are almost all expressed in terms of the "heart." In other words, the heart was regarded as the seat of the intellect and emotions, presumably because the emotions when of a violent character affect the "sympathetic" or ganglionic nervous system and the heart shows the disturbance most strongly. As example we cite the following compound characters: The term "virtue" consists of a radical meaning "to walk" combined with "straight" and "heart."

The character "like" above "heart" means "reciprocity."

The character "slave" above "heart" means "anger."

The character "receive" above "heart" means "love."

The character "inferior" above "heart" means "hate."

The character "scholar" above "heart" means "will."

The character "mutual" above "heart" means "think."

The character "middle" above "heart" means "sincerity."

Dual Consciousness in Chinese Psychology.

The distinction between the central energies of the cerebro-spinal nervous system and those of the ganglionic (sympathetic) system has only recently been made out (See Hudson's *Law of Psychic Phenomena*) and is clearly adumbrated in the scholastic *animus* and *anima* and the Chinese *hun* and *p'o*. These are the personalized forms of the psychic quantities *shen* and *kuei*. The energies are re-

spectively termed *ch'i* and *ching*, and are regarded as special forms of the positive (*yang*) and negative (*yin*) polarities of energy. The *hun* is supposed to wander at times during life and after death, while the *p'o* controls the animal functions and only persists in a shadowy form after death. Stimulated, the *hun* manifests as *chih* the will, while the *p'o* is the seat of emotion, *ch'ing*.

The ideas outlined above are almost all that can be gleaned from the ordinarily accessible native works. The practice of meditation in Buddhist and Taoist monasteries is undoubtedly based on careful observations of the results of "religious exercises." The Rev. Timothy Richard of Shanghai has translated a book which he calls the "Guide to Buddhahood," *Hsüan Fo p'u* (literally "The Record of the Selection of the Buddha").

This is a graduated statement of the development of the soul on ecstatic lines and reminds one of St. Teresa's *Castillo Interior*. Commencing with introspection of morals, it passes to contemplation of virtue and then through a whole series of meditations on mythological concepts, which will culminate in Nirvana. The analogy with the stages of apotheosis described by Plotinus and the Sufis is obvious.

An acquaintance with such mental conditions (probably accompanied by strange phenomena in various cases due to the nervous idiosyncrasies of the individual) would be quite sufficient to provide a working hypothesis for such a movement, as that of the I-ho-ch'üan. By those who care for the terminology it may be legitimately called "black magic," although it amounts to very little more than the control exerted by religious fanatics generally on those of their disciples who have been "worked up" to the point of hysteria. There is this difference, however, that in the East the moving spirits generally know to some extent what they are doing, whereas in the West this knowledge

is only possessed by those who have little or no occasion to employ it.

In conclusion the writer would point out that the normal Chinese mind is very acute, but conservative and lacking initiative. When excited however beyond a certain point, it exhibits a wild frenzy which is utterly reckless of consequences. These characteristics of course are not peculiar to the people but seem, at least to the writer, to be more marked than in the European. Speaking broadly, the European in China behaves as if he had little or no self-control in small matters, whereas in important things he generally becomes cool. With the Chinese it is the reverse, perfect nonchalance in ordinary affairs but imperfect balance in large ones. The writer does not of course suggest this is universally true of individuals.

THE MAGICAL USE OF BLOOD.

In the highest and lowest of ceremonial religions, and almost universally in connection with magic, we find references to the potency of blood.

The standard methods of ancestor-worship⁸ include a bloody sacrifice to the manes, and an anointing with blood of the eidolon which represents the spirit. Primitively the blood is placed in the mouth of the figure. Almost in all cases it is conceived as providing vitality to the ghost. The invocation of the ghosts in the *Odyssey* is a typical case. The *Pentateuch* says "the blood is the life," and to this day the Jews abstain from meat which is not *kosher*, i. e., deprived of blood.

In China there are similar notions. Thus under the character *hsüeh*, "blood," in Giles's Dictionary the following phrase occurs:

Jen hsüeh chih wei yeh huo yeh, "Man's blood causes strange fire."

⁸ See Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God*.

This emanation from blood is also termed *kuei huo*, "ghostly fire."

Again in the medieval books on magic we find that

1. Numerous prescriptions and charms require blood, and even bloody sacrifices are necessary in some cases;
2. Books professing to teach only pure theurgy recommend the practitioner to avoid the use of blood.

The aversion for blood also appears in the practices of bloodless execution employed by the Turks and the Inquisition.

The atoning power of blood is referred to in the seventeenth chapter of Leviticus, and developed in Christianity into the eucharistic sacrifice. It is also fairly clearly recognized in all bloody rites performed in the service of spirits.

Other references can be drawn from numerous sources. The marvelous blood-stains which remain on hero's sword and in haunted house; the practice of signing important acts (such as pacts with the devil!) in blood; the impurity of blood when on the person; all illustrate the general conception of its extraordinary properties.

The persistence and generality of such ideas point to some underlying psychical fact. At first sight the common experience of nausea or fainting at the sight of blood might be regarded as the fundamental cause, but a little consideration will show that this is either one of the effects of the cause we seek or a vestigial retro-reminiscence of the beliefs on the subject which dominated our forefathers.

To the writer it appears that the mere continuous juxtaposition of blood with pain and death in common experience, extending through untold generations, is quite sufficient to account for the effects and beliefs which have been referred to, acting in accordance with the laws of psychic change. In minds which have not been trained to oppose the quasi-mechanical suggestions of revived memories by

specially developed associations (religious or scientific), the percept of blood will immediately call up memories of pain and death. These again will be followed by memories of incipient insensibility and fear, which will tend to be realized again in the organism by a partial paralysis of the motor centers etc., i. e., the organism will reproduce as far as possible the state remembered.

These changes, proceeding from a cause not immediately apparent to sense, are naturally ascribed to an external source, more particularly in view of the fact that another person (such as a wizard) can by insistent suggestion (with or without hypnosis) set the train of transformation in motion.

Blood has a quite perceptible smell (the extraordinary sensitiveness of carnivorous animals and insects needs only to be mentioned in support of this fact) and a perception of this is sufficient to provide a basis for the belief in peculiar sanguinary emanations. Add to this the obvious connection between blood and vitality, and we have a complete nexus of percepts which will suggest all the magical ideas mentioned, and by the encouragement of such suggestions will tend to realize the psychical counterparts of such magical causes.

Some modifications in this statement may be conceded to those who under the vague name of occultists contend that a whole series of supernormal laws continuously operates on human affairs. Such will say that all the properties attributed to blood in universal spiritualistic belief are real, that spirits (shells) can absorb sanguinary emanations and thereby vitalize themselves, etc. To them it may be said that using the word "spirit" as equivalent to "idea" the difference is merely a matter of terminology.

HERBERT CHATLEY.

T'ANG SHAN, NORTH CHINA, Oct. 1911.